

Appl. No. 10/712,239
Atty. Docket No. 9103M
Amendment dated September 5, 2006
Reply to Office Action of April 5, 2006
Customer No. 27752

RECEIVED
CENTRAL FAX CENTER
SEP 05 2006

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 remain pending in the present application. Claim 1 has been amended to further define the second regions as strained regions forming protruding elements. Support for the amendment is provided at page 9, lines 5-11.

Rejection Under 35 USC §103(a) Over DOBRIN et al. (US 6,383,431 B1)

Claims 1-11 have been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over DOBRIN. According to the Office Action, DOBRIN et al. discloses a method for modifying the physical characteristics of a nonwoven fibrous web, which involves passing the web between at least one pair of inter engaged rolls to incrementally stretch the web, and then withdrawing the incrementally stretched web from between the rolls under tension. (Abstract) The reference also relates to disposable absorbent articles and teaches a nonwoven material with a deformation pattern in the form of ridges and grooves defining an array of spaced, diamond-shaped elements 100 with intervening un-deformed areas 102. (Col. 12, lines 2-24; Figures 10-11) Figures 10 and 11 show the patterns of the forming rolls that are transferred into the nonwoven web. Referring to the Figures, the Office Action interprets the first and second regions of the present invention as being provided by the DOBRIN reference.

The Office Action Admits that DOBRIN is silent to locking the protruding elements in the second region by the reinforcing means of the present invention and relies on SMITH (U.S. Patent No. 3,616,157) to provide the necessary teaching. According to the Office Action, SMITH is directed to an embossed nonwoven fabric having a textured character and fabric-like qualities of softness suitable for wiping surfaces having aqueous liquids. (Abstract) In addition, the Office Action contends that Figure 4 of SMITH shows a configuration in which the embossed nonwoven fabric 26 is used for wiping or cleaning purposes and areas 22 (similar to the second portions of the present invention) are reinforced by thermal bonding. (Refer to Col. 3, lines 31-45)

Attorney for the Applicant has amended claim 1 to claim the second region as comprising a strained region forming a protruding element. Support for the amendment is provided at page 9, lines 5-11. Review of Column 3, lines 31-45 and the rest of disclosure in SMITH reveals no reference to a strained region forming a protruding element locked by a reinforcing means selected from the group consisting of thermal bonding, chemical bonding, ionic bonding, adhesive bonding and combinations thereof. Column 3, lines 31-45 of SMITH describes embossed, compacted fibrous areas which lie

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Appl. No. 10/712,239
Atty. Docket No. 9103M
Amendment dated September 5, 2006
Reply to Office Action of April 5, 2006
Customer No. 27752

in planes of substantially parallel top and bottom surfaces of a nonwoven fabric. These compacted areas of SMITH are compressed as opposed to being strained as claimed. Therefore, the combination of DOBRIN and SMITH does not teach all of the limitations of claim 1 or claims 2-11 depending therefrom.

Conclusion

In light of the above remarks, it is requested that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection under 35 USC §103(a). Early and favorable action in the case is respectfully requested.

This response represents an earnest effort to place the application in proper form and to distinguish the invention as now claimed from the applied references. In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of this application, entry of the amendment presented herein, and allowance of claims 1-11 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

THE PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY

By


Signature

Jay A. Krebs

Registration No. 41,914

(513) 634-9959

Date: September 5, 2006
Customer No. 27752